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AUTHOR La Porte, Angela M.
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ABSTRACT

This paper identifies the building of community during an ethnographic study of an intergenerational art education program in Harlem, New York City. The study examined intergenerational interactions between seniors and teenagers during their participation in an afterschool art program. Seniors were chosen from a list of 100 persons registered for Meals-on-Wheels, and teenagers chosen were primarily from the same neighborhood. The research described, analyzed, and interpreted interactions between the young students and older participants during the programs three components: oral history, art making, and social service. All activities contributed to the formation of relationships between teens and seniors. Collecting oral histories and making art works intensified the exchange of personal history and culture, reduced age-related stereotypes, and empowered young and older participants. Intergenerational exchanges during art making provided a relaxed, unintimidating setting, and art training became more focused and meaningful when older adults were present. Interactions between teenagers and seniors during the intergenerational art program built community through a dialogic process including both educational and social implications. Community within the context of the study included a body of people who developed mutual respect and understanding for one another and participated freely in dialogue among different ethnicities, ages, and genders. (Author/BT)

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by Angela M. La Porte

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Angela M. LaPorte

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Building Community Through Intergenerational Art Education

Abstract

This presentation identifies the building of community during an ethnographic study of an intergenerational art education program in Harlem, New York City. I examined intergenerational interactions between seniors and teenagers during their participation in an afterschool art program. I described, analyzed, and interpreted interactions between the young students and older participants during the program's three components: oral history, art making, and social service. All activities contributed to the formation of relationships between teens and seniors. Collecting oral histories and making art intensified the exchange of personal history and culture, reduced age-related stereotypes, and empowered young and older participants. Intergenerational exchanges during art making provided a relaxed unintimidating setting; art training became more focused and meaningful when older adults were present.

Interactions between teenagers and seniors during the intergenerational art program built community through a dialogic process including both educational and social implications. Community within the context of this study included a body of people who developed mutual respect and understanding for one another and participated freely in dialogue among different ethnicities, ages, and/or genders.

Purpose

The purpose of my research was to better understand interactions between teenagers and older adults in a multicultural inner-city visual art program. I considered how interactions between teenagers and seniors redefine art education, the art learning experience and the manner in which these findings can be formally applied to art education.

The Neighborhood

On October 21st, 1996, I began the first of 43 visits that took place during a seven month participant observation of the daily after-school intergenerational art program for teenagers and seniors in the Lower East Harlem public housing projects. I chose this site for its wealth of cultural heritage. The rich and exotic ethnic history of the area intrigued me and amplified my curiosity and enthusiasm.

The neighborhood, sometimes known as El Barrio, extended north of 96th Street and east of Fifth Avenue, bordering the northern edge of one of the wealthiest cities in the world. East Harlem, one of the poorest neighborhoods in the country, has faced many chronic economic and social problems such as poverty, drug abuse, and broken homes. AIDS has been documented as one of the fastest growing killers in this neighborhood; in 1992, 13.4 percent of adults were HIV positive. Approximately 18.8 percent of the same population have been intravenous drug users. This area has had the highest recorded rate of child abuse and neglect in New York City and the highest number of births to teenagers in the United States (Freiden. erg, 1995; Demographic Profiles, 1992). Many parents have been afflicted with AIDS, have been drug addicts or have been in prison, and grandparents often have become principal caregivers or guardians of their grandchildren. One of the teens in the program was being raised by his grandmother who was in her 40s. Others were from single parent homes. The 18-year-old boyfriend of one of the girls had been abandoned by both of his parents. The whereabouts of his father was unknown; his mother left him and a younger brother and moved to Florida. Nearly all of the East Harlem residents involved with this program resided in public housing projects which were deteriorating, vermin infested and overcrowded.

According to the 1990 United States Census, the socioeconomic conditions found in this area have been devastating. Approximately 40 percent of the area's population have been living below poverty level, earning less than $10,000 per annum. Another 20 percent of the population have earned under $20,000. Lower Manhattan's (below 96th Street) 1992

median household income was $32,262, well above East Harlem's $14,882. In Harlem, 51 percent of the population have not finished high school. Unemployment has increased 52 percent over the last decade as compared to 20 percent in Manhattan (Freidenberg, 1995)

My first personal encounter with this community began when I crossed the 96th Street boundary separating these two inner-city neighborhoods, an indistinguishable border to me at the time. According to Watkins-Owens (1996), prior to the 1930s, the southern boundary of Harlem has been 127th Street; the area to the south was considered Upper Manhattan. Italians had lived east of Third Avenue from 125th Street south and Russian Jews had resided south of 110th street to where I waited that first day for a red light at 96th Street. Even earlier Harlem had been an affluent white suburb (Hamalian, 19920). During my study, to the south of 96th Street, there were newer well kept and landscaped buildings. But to the north, decaying tenements and public housing projects dominated the cityscape. I soon realized that there was no need for a line on the map indicating the division between Manhattan and Harlem. As I referred to a 1996 travel guide of the city, I noticed that it referenced no listings for restaurants or hotels, and no shopping highlights above 96th Street. Subway tracks emerged above ground and loomed over Central Harlem's neighborhoods. The only new building along the north side of 96th Street was the impressive Muslim Mosque.

Enveloped by this new world, a sense of fear and compassion swept through me. North of a sea of mostly white, upper middle-class people, I entered an ocean of primarily Puerto Rican, Dominican, and African American neighborhood in an area punctuated by deserted buildings with barred or bricked-in windows, and walls covered with gang graffiti or murals in tribute to youthful victims of crime. In front of one row of tenements, a tree blossomed with stuffed animals hanging from its limbs. Kozol (1995) has referred to a similar mysterious tree in the South Bronx in his ethnography, "Amazing Grace." Perhaps it was a memorial or an inconspicuous sight for drug sales. One teen said, "A young child probably died there."

I passed by sidewalks strewn with trash and windblown paper, vacant lots cluttered with abandoned cars and garbage, even a rat carcass in a puddle on the sidewalk. As I approached the senior center that was to be the base for my study, I noticed a discarded white rag doll on a pile of rubble behind a chain link fence. An occasional child's shriek or adult's shout broke through the din of traffic and the racket from a nearby playground. Across the busy street a loudspeaker crackled, its message of redemption blaring out above the school children with their book bags, crowding the entrance of a tiny storefront. Perhaps the cast-off doll was an omen.

Within this inner-city community, I was an outsider, a white graduate student of Italian descent. Outwardly, I could almost have passed for a Latina, but from within, I was different.

Since I did not share a similar background with the study participants, I felt uneasy about taking on the role of participant-as-observer in the initial part of the study. But I hoped that the extensive time interacting with participants would eventually have allowed me to become unobtrusive.

I began the study in a participant-as-observer role, a member directly involved in the group experience by being involved as a class participant and establishing a trust with students through extensive direct contact. My position, participant-as-observer, required less involvement than a full participant, thus allowing more time for observation.

The Participants

Participating seniors in this intergenerational program were aged 62 and older, and were chosen from a list compiled of 100 persons registered for the city's Meals-on-Wheels program. The majority lived in public housing projects within El Barrio. The 10 to 12 teenagers in the program ranged in age from 14 through 18 and were primarily from the same neighborhood. Most of the participants were from lower income households. They were representative of the multi-ethnic neighborhood, and were Puerto Rican, Dominican,

and African American. A few of the seniors and teenagers also spoke and/or understood Spanish. All were fluent in English.

The high school students became involved with the intergenerational program through the encouragement of school teachers, counselors, and friends. As participants, they were expected to maintain an acceptable academic standing (passing grades) throughout the seven month program. All teens received a $200 stipend for each three months of regular participation (six hours per week in the program. As least two had considered volunteering without the monetary incentive.

The youths identified mixed reasons for joining the program. Some wanted work experience and hoped to improve upon their communication skills. Others joined the program exclusively for the money, and possibly, for a place to go and socialize with other teens. A few received high school credit. One of the teens said, "I just like the idea of actually helping somebody, the idea of talking to that person and seeing were they came from, and how they dealt with things we're doing right now." Another said, "I'm here to get to know the old people, to help them out." One of the teens never had the opportunity to know her grandparents and felt confident that she would find one in the program. "You can pick them." Many envisioned the older adults to be the helpless members of their community and felt as if they were doing a good deed.

The Art Program

This art program differed from those previously documented in the organization's literature. Usually, an artist or art educator, trained by the organization, coordinated activities and interactions between the teens and seniors. I was to find out later that the grant proposal for the intergenerational program was only partially funded. Since the proposed program was a joint project with a New York City social service agency for seniors, the remaining funding came from the latter with certain conditions. In addition to the visual art portion of the program written in the original proposal, a social service agenda had been added. The

objectives for both programs were to build community by developing intergenerational relationships and erasing stereotypes. The manner in which each program would reach that objective varied. The visual arts portion of the program encouraged participants to learn about each other's oral histories and acquire art skills adequate to construct a collage rooted in the senior's life history. The social service agency's activities required monthly quotas for friendly visits, phone reassurance, and shopping assistance. During friendly visits, teenagers visited the residences of homebound seniors. Phone reassurance included any conversation with seniors via the telephone. Shopping assistance was simply helping homebound seniors with shopping by accompanying them or going to the store for them. I discovered later that the program coordinator's goals and objectives were influenced by her funding sources, especially by the social service agency, which constantly applied pressure to meet their monthly quotas. The arts organization initially had some difficulty finding support for the art training and activities.

I planned my study to investigate how the art portion of the program, as described in the art organization's grant proposal, would be implemented. The teens worked at least six hours weekly at the center. That time was divided up into phone reassurance, friendly visits, shopping assistance, interviews (questioning seniors about their lives), and art and oral history training.

The general program training sessions, conducted by the director of the intergenerational arts organization, involved how to make family trees with the seniors to encourage them to establish intergenerational relationships. The oral history interviews expanded upon these relationships and served as sources for collage themes. Weekly art training sessions over a period of five months with a professional artist was devoted to studio art. Teens learned various techniques for making a collage using a variety of media. The social services required by the city grant (phone reassurance, friendly visits, and shopping assistance) had not been mentioned in the proposal written by the visual arts organization and were not mentioned during the general raining session. The coordinator

and the director had described very different means of developing intergenerational relationships and it was unclear to me at the time how they would be integrated into a single process.

The arts organization had developed a variety of programs over the past decade, whose goals were to diminish social and psychological problems experienced within inner-city communities (i.e., depression, dementia, suicide, and the development of age-related stereotypes). The organization's activities were funded by a combination of grants and corporate support. The program's backbone has been the sharing of oral histories. These oral histories have been transformed into a variety of artistic representations such as plays, illustrated books, photography and video exhibits, or collage. The particular program I studied focused on the latter.

From mid-October through May, teenagers met with seniors from the neighborhood, exchanging family trees and collecting oral histories. Then, pairs of teens worked cooperatively with each of four seniors to create four collages that represented important themes from the seniors' lives.

This intergenerational art program brought several homebound elders of East Harlem together with teenagers who came from the same and surrounding communities. The goal of bringing the two generations together was to develop positive relationships between the teenagers and seniors. This diminished common stereotypes about the old and the young, and decreased mental and physical problems associated with isolation of both groups from each other. It encouraged partnerships and sharing, and built relationships through the process of collecting oral histories and making visual art.

My research extended beyond the program's purpose to begin to identify the educational values of intergenerational art education by understanding how old and young people interact within this particular context, which included the study site, the curriculum, intergenerational relationships, and participants' ages, gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Findings were limited to the data collected by the researcher from the locations of

this intergenerational art program during its specified duration. Although data was triangulated, it was site specific, and therefore, some findings may only be relevant to similar situations and participants.

The three program components were social service, oral history, and art making. Social service included pre-program training, phone reassurance, friendly visits, and shopping assistance. Oral history involved family tree training, creating a family tree, an oral history workshop, and collecting oral histories from seniors. Methods of oral history interviews involved formal and informal questions and an extension of inquiry through the discussion of relative artworks from the history of Harlem's people. Art making consisted of studio art experiences for participants led by a professional artist, which also included developing a theme idea web [schematic plan] for a collage, and making a collage.

Findings

Outcomes of intergenerational interactions emerged from triangulated data collected during the final three to four months, after implementation of the art program adaptations. I described, analyzed, and interpreted interactions between seniors and teenagers in the form of three program components: social service, oral history and art making. All activities contributed to the formation of relationships between teenagers and seniors. Collecting oral histories and making art intensified the exchange of personal history and culture, reduced age-related stereotypes, and empowered young and older participants. All of these helped create community among the participants. As a result of intergenerational relationships, art making became less intimidating and more meaningful for the teens. Oral histories created an open dialogue for learning art context. Data from participants, my observations, and supporting literature provided a clearer understanding of intergenerational interactions within this east Harlem community-based art program.

Initially, when teens contacted older adults from the community to participate in the intergenerational art program, many hesitated. One senior was afraid to get involved and was

nervous about the teens coming to his apartment. Another's original apprehensions were magnified by these words from her sister, "You gotta be careful. You hear so many things," and she added, "If I let somebody take me out they may never bring me back." One older woman couldn't understand why teens would want to know about her history. "There's nothin' too much," she said.

Despite rough beginnings, relationships developed over time during all three components of the program: social service, oral history and art making. Evidence of caring relationships were evident in the following quotes. One teen said,

> It's nice to know that you care about somebody else even though you might not have known them that long, and they also like to see you. They look forward to it. They want you to come see them, not because you're here and have to see somebody. Both of you look forward to seeing each other and talking. That's a good experience.

A senior commented on the collage making activity,

> You ought to see them. When they do it [work on the collage], I notice, they just don't do it because they're doing it. They take an interest. If they didn't take an interest, they wouldn't know what to ask me, what I like and what I didn't like. The way how [sic] they do it, you see they take an interest. . . . they get up with such feelings to do it. Some people, they do it and just don't care. . . . When they do it, they do it with such a grace, a feeling, uplifting.

Many relationships were familial. According to another senior,

> She treats me like her daughter, and it's very attached. . . . she could recognize my voice. . . . We had a little trouble in the beginning 'cause I didn't know her, and we didn't know each other, but after . . . four months, she is great. . . . She'll talk to me and say, "Hi Rose, do you want to go shopping today or do you want to do this today?" I grew very attached to her.

I observed some visual evidence of relationships also. For example, When Teresa and Bonita interviewed Carmina, I noticed the girls' positions and their interest in what she had to say. Teresa sat beside Bonita, both facing Carmina. Teresa's mother sat just outside of our circle and jumped into the conversation as a translator at times. I knew immediately that there was some special tie between the girls and Carmina. On earlier visits the girls had done their best to distance themselves physically and personally. They sat at opposite ends of the room and had little eye contact with elders. Now, after several visits, Carmina opened up her life to us, a story which we had tried to elicit many times before, but which she had assiduously avoided. Meanwhile, the teens' eyes were locked on her while Teresa's hand rested on Carmina's lap.

Relationships established in the program were lasting ones. Visits and phone calls occurred frequently outside of the program. One team of teens who left the program continued to visit their senior partner. These relationships provided an excellent learning environment.

Most teens enjoyed asking oral history questions. One team argued over who would ask the next question. As intended, discussions were not limited to questions from the formal theme interview worksheets. Students developed their own topics of historical inquiry ranging from how much everyday purchases used to cost and weekly earnings to the Savoy Ballroom, gender roles and magazines or comic books, and sporting events. Comparing prices then with now was a common preoccupation among the teens.

Many interesting conversations took place during oral history interviews, particularly when students interrupted with their own questions. One episode stands out in my mind. During an interview at Mr. Smith's apartment, Dante leaned back on the couch and closed his eyes, claiming to have and excruciating headache. But Juanita's question, "Do you remember the death of Malcolm X"," brought him out of it, and he took over the interview.

Dante: Do you remember when Martin Luther King died?

Mr. Smith: Yes.

Dante: How was that?

Mr. Smith: Everybody was saddened, and I was saddened, because I looked at Martin Luther King as being a hero and a leader.

Dante: Me too.

Mr. Smith: And he brought a hell of a lot of changes in this country.

Dante: And he didn't even use any violence.

Mr. Smith: No.

Dante: That's it.

Through oral history questioning and discussions about historically and culturally relevant artwork, seniors shared their personal history and culture with teenagers. Making their lives the center of interest gave them a unique opportunity to display the understandings they had achieved through experience in a situation that valorized this knowledge. The young participants often responded with contemporary comparisons and contributed original questions of interest such as, "What was it like to go to the Savoy Ballroom?" and "How much did it cost back then?" Most acknowledged that they gained a better understanding of their community's heritage through the unique voices of older adults. Dante commented,

> I learned about their background and some things from history from a person who was around during that time. It gave me a clearer picture. . . . I used to like it when he [Bernard] talked about how Harlem used to be. I can imagine. A picture of the current Harlem is nothin' you want to decorate your living room with. He told me how nice it was. I only seen [sic] it in the movies, but when somebody says it out of their mouth that they were actually there, it's different. You get more details. It's like bringing history to life.

Miguel emphasized his support for learning from those with experience: "Here [in schools], you teach in books. The other way, I see in person with my two eyes." The intergenerational dialogue gave voice to seniors through the sharing of their personal memories and cultural histories, which became a "medium of expression, an empathetic way of seeing through another's eyes," as Gablik (1995, p. 82) has asserted. Providing a means of expression, a voice, is empowering to those who have been ignored, or disenfranchised.

Oral history questions prompted discussions about events during the Great Depression, famous people and places, entertainment, everyday life before modern technological conveniences, traditions, immigration, and more.

A few of the seniors responded to questions regarding Father Divine, a religious leader in the 1930s who helped feed and organize the poor in Harlem. The teens were evidently unaware of Father Divine's work. They listened intently to some of the comments made by Miss Miller:

> He was a religious man. . . . He used to charge 30 or 25 cents a meal. He used to help the people, the hungry people. That's back in the Depression.

Teens also learned about segregation during the 1940s from an older man who experienced it. Mr. Smith spoke of his early years at a school in the South.

> The elementary school ran from one through seven. Eighth grade was junior high. We only had one school. We had segregation. So, the blacks went to their school and the whites went to their school. That happened in the county that I'm from . . . . We had another race of people called the Indians, and they had their school.

When a teen inquired further asking what he disliked about school, Bernard replied,

> The books that we got were from the white school, if you will. Many of the pages were missing, and we had to use those books. I didn't like that part about it, but we had to do with what we had.

While many in our country have looked back on "the good ol' days," these personal stories of segregation and racial prejudice have left oppressive memories among our older volunteers and brought a poignant silence among the youth. More eloquent testimony could not be offered by either textbooks or teachers.

For many people who immigrated to the United States during the early part of this century, life was a struggle. Anna spoke of her family's experience, which was shared by many others, including some of the youngsters' great grandparents, who were no longer available to share their stories.

> It was tough here. When I was a very young child, I remember soup lines, bread lines. That's when my mother died. Then, my grandmother came. She took me back to the Virgin Islands. My father's mother took my brother. It wasn't as bad down there. She had a garden. My uncle came up here from the Virgin Islands because of the war. That's the United States. You know, when a person comes from somewhere, the family follows. That's how different ones followed him here, but he came here and got a job in the Navy yard. He stayed there and the family migrated to Philadelphia.

While life was hard for many people living in Harlem during the early part of this century, we also heard warm personal reflections on those times. Many seniors mentioned listening to the radio at home for entertainment, or making excursions to the theatre to watch cartoons on Saturdays. One student asked jokingly, "Didn't you have video games?" Mr. Smith explained,

> On Saturday, there were five cartoons. "Flash Gordon" was one. Every week there'd be a new installment. They had a cowboy picture. You take your lunch. Some kids would stay in there all day until they put 'em out, but it was a four hour show. There wouldn't be grownups there unless they brought their child, because there was too much noise.

Observing teen interviews with seniors allowed me to recognize more readily a shortcoming of traditional education, the exclusion of historical and cultural voices of minorities. But when the lived experiences of the Hispanic and African American older adults in Harlem were shared with interested teenagers, they became significant to the teenagers, and this recognition was empowering to the elders.

I asked an older African American woman, who had lived in Harlem all of her life, to respond to Palmer Hayden's painting, "Midsummer Night in Harlem." She said,

> This here is nice! [excitedly] This looks like jazz town. This looks like real Harlem! Jazz town. This reminds me of 125th Street. With all our cousins sittin' out there. Look at that [senior laughs]! Smokey Joe and all of them out there.

Then I asked her, "what would you say if you were one of the women in the painting?"

> "Good morning. Hello–How are you?" Then gossip, you know [Rose laughed]. If a lady has a son that she wants to get off, she introduces you. . . . Years ago they used to pick matches, but sometimes it didn't work. If she have a daughter, she's gonna pick a fella that she figures is nice for the daughter. Now, it's up to the daughter whether she likes him or not. She's not worrying about that.

Young participants acquired a firsthand understanding of Harlem's rich history through question/answer dialogue with seniors about reproductions of historically and culturally relevant artwork. The images served as representations of material culture. I encouraged teenagers to analyze the work as a researcher would study material culture from various perspectives, i.e., psychological, archeological, anthropological and historical; to consider the original context in time, its change over time, culture, and one's relationship to what is represented in the artwork. Since the elders could personally associate with what was represented in the artwork, they were primary sources for oral histories. Their personal reflections on the circumstances surrounding an image or an artifact and its place in time and culture yielded an opportunity for a greater understanding of the artwork. The interpretation of artwork through the personal memories of elders, and their lived

experiences as revealed through the oral history project were sources of understanding the artwork and the art making process. Oral history discussion empowered older adults, giving them a forum to share their personal knowledge of the past and compare it with the present.

While the young participants worked with elders toward the design and completion of the seniors' collage, all were empowered by the tasks. Seniors directed teens in portraying a collage theme from early in their lives, which positioned them as historical/cultural experts. Teens used their acquired art skills with various media: watercolor and tempera paint, clay and plaster, and the arrangement of found objects to portray the theme while seniors complimented their efforts. Art making, which had been previously perceived by teens as little more than the manipulation of media, began to include personally meaningful content through dialogue about their collage themes (i.e., the culture of Puerto Rico, religion, and childhood).

One intergenerational team (all Hispanic) followed my suggestion to discuss the meaning of the Puerto Rican theme subject matter as it was added to the collage. As Rita handed the teens her Christmas card cutout of Puerto Rican musical instruments, she explained that they used to accompany a Parranda (party) of singers and noise makers who would go house to house.

> At Christmas, they come around the house starting the 24th of December through the 6th of January. People would come playing instruments and singing and drink coquito [a coconut drink for the holidays]. . . . Sometimes, the people played tricks. The Three Kings is the 6th of January. We used to go to the country . . . . We go from house to house. We also eat pork.

The names of famous Puerto Rican women were also included in Rita's collage. She brought a book she had been reading about the lives of famous women from this century who were born in Puerto Rico. Rita said,

> Those were women from the past century. They suffered a lot. . . . In those times, it was not so easy as now. You see, now in Puerto Rico most everybody has a house

> with a balcony and this and that, but before there were three or four people sleeping in the same room. That was different.

The women portrayed in the collage had achieved more than what was expected of women during that time, She included a poet, a writer, a movie star, a mayor and other famous women. As Bonita signed the names to the collage, Rita briefly told the story of their lives: Julia de Burgos, Antonia Bonilla, Felisa Rincon, Rita Moreno, Doris Matos de Pasarella, and others.

Teens are less intimidated when working with seniors. Normally, they feel incompetent with making art. They say, "I can't do that," but in the presence of seniors, the artist said "they feel like they are doing something good." He also felt there were less discipline problems when the seniors were around. The teens were more focused. The collages done in the presence of seniors included more meaningful content than the materialistic fantasy collages previously produced by the teens during trainings.

The young participants changed their view of older adults: One teen said,

> She [Maria] changed my view a lot. She is very nice. I thought that some seniors was [sic] selfish, angry, you know, always out for themselves. Like on the buses, they would look at you and you'd have to move all the way to the back.

Examining the intergenerational interactions during the final four to five months of this program illuminated some important social and educational implications. Although social service work sometimes resulted in casual friendships between young and old, age-related stereotypes persisted throughout the first three months. Teenagers continued to view seniors as people who simply needed help, but who had little to contribute to their community.

As the program progressed, these friendships set the stage for intergenerational dialogue which occurred during interviews, discussions about historically and culturally relevant artwork and art-making. During these interplays, authority of the voices of youth and of wisdom shifted. Elders respected teens as the trained experts in constructing the

collage while seniors personal historical and cultural expertise became the central focus of the collage. As a result, age-related stereotypes diminished and the young learned more about the personal treasures within their community. Art-making in this study was an attempt to convey personal cultural and historical meaning through dialogue pertaining to the collage theme. During intergenerational interactions, the youth moved from the materialistic iconography of pop culture identified in earlier collages to meaningful representations of the ongoing dialogue based on the elders' life experiences. Art was about process (intergenerational dialogue), not product. Art-making represented their vision, their definition of their own relations with previous generations. The concepts that emerged in this study expand our current understandings of art and art education to be a dialogic process including both educational and social implications that contributes to the building of community.

The art education portrayed in this study was reminiscent of what Gablik (1991) has described as a "more participatory, socially interactive framework" (p. 7), in opposition to the modernist practice which has "kept art as a specialized pursuit devoid of practical aims and goals" (p. 7). The process of art education was an ongoing dialogue between two generations during which educational and social implications emerged. The program's goal was not to produce professional artists but to develop community.

Likewise, Hamblen's (1995) postmodern definition of art education, which valorizes the importance of the personal knowledge and the experience of non-experts, was eloquently illustrated during the Harlem program's oral history and art making interactions All participants shared in the construction of knowledge through dialogue. Seniors, including one elderly woman who summed up her life early in the program as "nothin' much," felt empowered by the central role their life story played in the oral history gathering and art making phases of the program. The experience nurtured caring relationships and mutual respect between generations and helped establish an environment in which everyone was actively involved in learning.

Implications for Art Education

My research noted several positive educational and social implications which resulted from bringing teenagers and seniors together to engage in art related activities. Art education should consider the large demographic cohort of baby boomers as a resource for community art programming. In the Harlem program, intergenerational discussions about relevant artwork led to collaboration with elders in art making and encouraged youngsters to feel less intimidated and more focused. This has implications for other art educational settings, such as integrating seniors into art classrooms, programs in local art galleries or museums, and could also be collaboratively done with history, music, drama, and/or dance teachers in schools. It suggests that older adults can provide a nurturing environment for learning. In the presence of the older adults, teenagers overcame frustrations resulting from their preoccupation with realism. Finally, the Harlem art project suggested that intergenerational discussions about artwork and artifacts pertaining to the history and culture of participants can contribute to children's understanding of art because "they bring history [and culture] to life" through the voice of personal experience. Further research is warranted into other settings. Different age levels of children and older adults may provide other challenges.

The ongoing demographic shift will accentuate problems associated with age segregation, i.e., stereotypes, decline in self worth, loneliness and fear of aging, and will increase the pressing need for meaningful dialogue between generations. Before oral history and art making were established in my study, intergenerational dialogue was minimal and age-related stereotypes persisted and sometimes grew even more apparent. Seniors felt burdensome to their community and lacked a sense of autonomy and self-worth. Intergenerational interactions during this study contributed to the reduction of age-related stereotype, empowered participants, and generated an atmosphere of sharing.

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Author: Angela M. La Porte, Ph.D.

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